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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [KISL](#) [SOCI](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: ST LUCIA IFTAR HIGHLIGHTS COMPETITION IN LOCAL
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Classified By: POL/ECON Chief Ian Campbell, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

11. (C) The Iftar hosted by the Embassy in St. Lucia continued our efforts begun in Barbados in 2007 to reach out to the small but growing Muslim Community in the Eastern Caribbean. This community is appreciative of U.S. engagement. The local dynamics among Muslim groups competing for scarce resources and followers made planning this year a challenge due to schisms within St. Lucia's Islamic community. End summary.

Splits in St. Lucia's Muslim Community

12. (C) Twenty participants turned out for the Embassy-hosted Iftar in St. Lucia September 16 in partnership with the Islamic Association of St. Lucia, headed by Mr. Abdul Rasheed Popo as CEO, Mr. Azeez as assistant CEO, and Sergeant Willie (aka Mr. Tariq) as secretary. The association handled the guest list and organized the chef to prepare fish and vegetarian options, as a halal butcher is not available on island. Emboff reached out to two other notable Muslim groups in the north and south of the country. Crispin Fedee, who represents the northern group, declined to attend, claiming they had already made other plans for the planned date (Note: undoubtedly due to late notification; see below. End note.) Adul Robb Muhammad of the southern group, meanwhile, begged off due to logistical problems caused by the hour-plus drive to the site of the event. During these conversations, it became apparent that neither group was contacted about the event prior to our outreach, despite claims to the contrary from the Islamic Association.

14. (C) Divisions within the Islamic Association of St. Lucia itself also came to light during the planning. As our parallel event in Barbados progressed, emboffs learned from a Barbados Islamic community contact that, while Popo might give the appearance of support, he was not interested in helping us set up this event. Upon hearing this, Emboff reached deeper into the contact base to search for other interested Muslim groups. It was only when Sergeant Willie of the Port Police expressed an interest in hosting that Popo enthusiastically offered his services. At the same time, though, Popo took pains to sully the reputation of Willie, by claiming that he is disliked among the Muslim community.

St. Lucian Muslim Demographics, Dress and Custom

15. (C) The local Muslim community consists of around 300 adherents, almost exclusively of Sunni persuasion. Unlike the community in other islands, the majority in St. Lucia are

Afro-St. Lucians who converted to Islam, with only a minority being South Asian migrants from Guyana and Trinidad. Popo was himself an ordained Catholic Minister before converting to Islam. The followers are generally moderate but there are rumors of more conservative groups at the outskirts. In terms of dress and appearance, most of the men wore traditional white robes, while some women wore head scarves. However, some came dressed in casual attire and seemed comfortable among those more conservatively dressed. Men and women prayed in the same room, with men in front of the women. With the exception of one woman who ate by herself, the sexes mixed freely during the meal.

Comment

16. (C) While our event was welcomed both by those who attended and those who regretted, it quickly became clear that the Islamic community in St. Lucia is fractured and plagued by mistrust. Due to a scarcity of funds, all the groups are deeply protective of any sources of capital and do not share contacts. Each group wishes to exaggerate its influence to their followers while at the same time playing down resources to competitors. This atmosphere clearly made Popo feel threatened by our attempt at broader outreach, as he likely saw it as potentially diminishing his influence with us as "the" Islamic community contact for St. Lucia. Nevertheless, we are confident the positive event this year, and our attempts to include other communities on the island, will build expectations for next year, and serve to expand our contacts throughout St. Lucia's Islamic community. End Comment.

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